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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of Reading One-to-One, a structured paraprofessional tutorial program designed to improve the performance of at-risk students in grades K-8, particularly low-income, minority, and second-language learners. The program builds on some elements of Reading Recovery and Success For All. The curriculum combines explicit instruction on decoding skills with the use of small books ranked by difficulty level. Each one-on-one tutoring session allows for about 40 minutes of instruction, 3 or 4 days per week. Tutors have a specific curriculum to follow, and each session is divided into 4 main parts: review, direct instruction, reading, and writing. Activities and specific reading materials correlate to the student's ability. The program has been implemented in elementary schools, middle schools, and community centers in 100 schools in 25 cities in 6 states, as well as in Mexico. Evidence suggests that students need a minimum of 70 sessions for any gain in reading level, and that the program is much more successful using paid tutors. Sections of the paper discuss background, philosophy and goals, program components, evidence of effectiveness, professional development and support, implementation, costs, considerations, contact information, and policy issues and questions. (SR)

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Reading One-to-One

Background - Philosophy and Goals - Program Components - Evidence of Effectiveness
Professional Development and Support - Implementation - Costs - Considerations
Policy Issues and Questions - Resources

Topic or Category: Reading
Grade Level: K-8
Target Population: At-risk (particularly low-income, minority, ESL)

OVERVIEW

Background and Scope:

Reading One-to-One (ROTO) is a structured paraprofessional tutorial program developed at the University of Texas at Dallas. It began in 1991 as a service delivery/research project using research-based instructional methods. Designed to improve the reading performance of at-risk students, particularly low-income, minority and second-language learners, the program builds on some elements of Reading Recovery and Success For All.

Reading One-to-One operates out of the Center for Education and Social Policy within the University of Texas at Dallas' School of Social Sciences. The program has been implemented in elementary schools, middle schools and community centers in six states, as well as Mexico. ROTO is used in 100 schools in 23 cities throughout the United States, with the majority concentrated in Texas.

Schools recruit tutors from a variety of sources: community volunteers, teachers, teacher aides, college work-study students, AmeriCorps members and paid tutors. Program management is centered in the city where ROTO is implemented, although the Center for Education and Policy monitors all sites.

Philosophy and Goals:

The purpose of Reading One-to-One is to provide low-performing students with high-quality, low-cost reading tutoring during the regular school day. Its overall goal is to guide students in learning reading strategies and to provide practice time so they can achieve at grade level.

Program Components:

The curriculum combines explicit instruction on decoding skills with the use of small books ranked by difficulty level. The books include fiction and nonfiction and range in level from emergent literacy through fluency. Each one-on-one tutoring session allows for about 40 minutes of instruction, three or four days per week depending on the plan selected by the school.

Children in need of tutoring are selected by the teachers and principal. After assessment, each child is placed into one of three curricula: *Alphabet* is for children still learning their letters and sounds; *Word Family* focuses on the most basic decoding skills; and *Reading Comprehension* is appropriate for children able to read at least the easiest-level books on their own.

Key elements in the reading process are phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, word decoding ability and reading level. All three curricula include instruction in each of the seven phonemic awareness activities until mastery is achieved.

Tutors have a specific curriculum to follow, designed to incorporate the most effective research-based instructional methods. During sessions, tutors seek to identify the student's strengths and weaknesses in reading, provide lessons that teach unused reading skills and encourage the continuation of productive reading behavior.

Each tutoring session is divided into four main parts, with specific time limits for each component: (1) review, (2) direct instruction, (3) reading and (4) writing. The activities and specific reading materials correlate to the student's ability.

After every fifth session, students are assessed to determine progress. As they master each level, they advance to a higher curriculum. Detailed records concerning individual progress are updated each session and kept on file in the school.

Evidence of Effectiveness:

George Farkas and Keven Vicknair, directors of Reading One-to-One, have undertaken several statistical studies that suggest the following:
Reading is central to student performance.
Standardized test score gains for Reading One-to-One students receiving 70 tutoring sessions during the school year approximate 0.5 grade level above what these students would have gained in the absence of tutoring.
Student conduct and behavior, as reported by teachers, all show significant improvement as a result of one-on-one paraprofessional tutoring.

Large-scale study:
Farkas and Vicknair examined the program effects for children tutored during 1994-95, the fifth year of program operations. The study included 1,373 1st-, 2nd- and 3rd-grade students who had received at least 25 tutoring sessions that year. More than half the students were male and also overwhelmingly Hispanic: 75% among 1st graders, 72% among 2nd graders and 68% among 3rd graders. African-American children constituted 8% of tutored 1st graders, 19% of tutored 2nd graders and 25% of tutored 3rd graders.

The majority of the sample were considered seriously at risk of school failure. Sixty percent of tutored 1st graders were limited English proficient, as were 58% of 2nd graders and 54% of 3rd graders. Across all three grades, approximately 90% of tutored students received a free or reduced lunch (the great majority received a free lunch).

Across all three grades, the average student received about 61 tutoring sessions. Children who received fewer than 35 tutoring sessions were typically "alternates" who were tutored only when a regularly scheduled student was absent. Approximately 5% of the 1st graders, 4% of 2nd graders and 8% of 3rd graders fell into this category.

On two separate measures of reading (Reading Scale Score and Woodcock Reading Comprehension), ROTO students made substantial progress during the course of one year, but did not, on average, reach their grade level. Subsequent analysis showed that the students continued to make gains in their reading ability with additional tutoring. Estimated effects for 100 sessions are the following:
Gains of 7.3 months for 1st graders
Gains of 7.8 months for 2nd graders
Gains of 6.7 months for 3rd graders.

Findings from a recent study:
During the 1997-98 school year, teachers in a Dallas area elementary school identified 23 1st graders and 24 2nd graders who they felt would benefit from individualized tutoring. The sample was 55% male, 53% African-American and 6% Hispanic.

Students were randomly assigned to one group receiving tutoring (experimental group) and one group that did not (control group). All students in the study were administered three subsets of the Woodcock-Johnson Language Proficiency Battery, once at the beginning of the study in October and again at the end of the study in May.

The study found significant positive effects of paraprofessional tutoring through Reading One-to-One:
Tutored 1st graders' comprehension level increased from K.8 to 1.7 (gain of 0.9 after 27 hours of tutoring). Control group 1st graders not receiving one-on-one tutoring gained only 0.3, from 1.1 to 1.4 during the course of the year. Net effect of 27 hours of tutoring for 1st graders due to Reading One-to-One was a six-month increase in reading skill.
Tutored 2nd graders' comprehension level increased from 2.1 to 2.9 (gain of 0.8 after 31 hours of tutoring). Control group 2nd graders not receiving individualized tutoring gained only 0.4, or from 2.1 to 2.5 during the year. Net effect of 31 hours of tutoring for 2nd graders was a four-month increase.

Houston Independent School District:
During spring 1997, the district office worked with the staff of Reading One-to-One to train a cadre of tutors and to field test the program at 17 sites. The six-week study included 1,091 3rd, 4th and 5th graders who received 11,307 hours of one-on-on instruction, which resulted in significant gains:
The number of 3rd graders reading at grade level or above increased from 13% to 44%.
The number of 4th graders reading at grade level or above increased from 9% to 25%.
The number of 5th graders reading at grade level or above increased from 4% to 13%.

The Houston Independent School District is in its third year of operation, with 32 schools participating.

Richardson Independent School District (RISD) Academy, Richardson, Texas:
RISD Academy offers a one-on-one tutoring program to its at-risk students, many of whom are limited

English proficient, in grades 2-6. Students have made large positive gains through the program -- an average of one grade level in reading ability over the course of a semester of tutoring.

Professional Development and Support:

The staff members of the Center for Education and Social Policy at the University of Texas, Dallas, are available to provide the following services:
Setup, training and monitoring of one-to-one tutoring programs using college students and community residents as tutors
Setup, training and implementation of a program with teacher aides as tutors
Inservice reading training for teachers.

Implementation:

Paraprofessional tutors may be university students, members of community-based organizations or teacher aides. Tutor candidates must attend two three-hour certification sessions that describe the assessment procedures and the methods for instruction. Tutors are required to work at least six hours per week on at least two separate days. The center has found that the most effective way to use tutors in this program is to pay them hourly for their services.

Materials needed to implement Reading One-to-One include *Steck Vaughn Phonics Readers* book series, *Bob Books* series, *Wright Group Books* and the Woodcock-Johnson Reading Comprehension Scale.

Costs:

The first-year cost is $10,000 plus travel expenses for the tutor trainers. The fee includes a master copy of the 100-page tutor and coordinator manuals (which can be duplicated by the school), two initial four-hour training sessions, three or four follow-up visits and retraining sessions throughout the school year, a recommended book list, follow-up data analysis and reporting, and unlimited telephone support.

Additional costs vary depending on whether paid or volunteer tutors are used, the extent of purchase of materials and reproduction, and what other incidental expenses the school incurs. The cost of the recommended books and materials averages $1,000 per school.

Program costs are approximately $600 per child per one year of tutoring.

Considerations:

A major consideration for implementation is the availability of tutors. Since Reading One-to-One is a pull-out intervention, only a limited number of teachers might be available to serve as tutors.

Developers have found the program is much more successful using paid tutors, rather than volunteers. Cost of implementing Reading One-to-One have to include salary for paid tutors. Evidence suggests that students each need a minimum of 70 sessions for any gain in reading level.

Travel expenses for tutor trainers would be a consideration for schools and districts a great distance from Dallas, Texas.

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Policy Issues and Questions:

How can states help districts and schools choose the most appropriate reading programs to improve students' skills and performance? What information and assistance would be useful?
Should states promote particular reading programs for districts and schools to use?
How can a reading program's track record be checked and validated?
What criteria should states and districts use to invest in various reading programs initially and for the long term?
How should policymakers weigh the benefits of a reading program versus its cost and required resources? Can a balance be struck between effectiveness and efficiency?
What state policies can help improve teacher training and professional development so teachers are better equipped to help all students read successfully?

Resources:

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